

Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee
Minutes March 15, 2016
7:00pm Keene Public Library

Present: John Davis, Surry; Gus Merwin & Carl MacConnell, Marlow; Barbara Skuly, Chairman, Swanzey; Eloise Clark, Keene.

Minutes Feb. 16, 2016: Carl moves the minutes be approved as written, Gus seconds. All are in favor.

Permits:

Eversource poles on Route 12 in Keene. The Department of Transportation will not allow any utility lines to be buried in the right of way. Some areas of the adjoining wetlands will be impacted by the installation of poles. The group decides to “let it be” as it is not in the purview of ARLAC.

Sheeran shoreline development, Winchester: Craig Day of DES Shoreline Protection, granted the permit of the placement of a house in the footprint of an old one along the river. The group has concerns because of the closeness of the house to the river (<50’). It is located on a very narrow lot, so options are limited. It is near the canoe take-out at the covered bridge in Ashuelot. ARLAC can comment and if we feel there is a violation, DES stops the project. DES is obligated to read our comments. Barbara wonders if we could have done more and vows to keep an eye out in other communities but not intervene at this time.

DOT bridge scour reply, Winchester/Swanzey: DOT has replied to ARLAC concerns regarding this scour project. It is up to the contractor hired to follow “standard procedures.” They will need to make sure plantings are done. ARLAC is invited to a pre-construction meeting. NEPA requires the site should be accessible to recreational users and river monitoring. The contractor will also source the materials, such as the AJAX structures. All agree the quality of the work will depend upon who the contractor is. A concern is this is a very sandy part of the river with a lot of turbidity. Vegetation is key to holding the banks. The dwarf wedge mussel study is not yet complete.

Watershed projects/issues

Public Water Access Advisory Board: Does the Ashuelot have a “reasonable amount of access?” Cresson Bridge area in Swanzey needs better access. It is on town property. Is there access in Marlow below the dam? There is a put in at the end of Mill St., above Grassy Brook. Landowners need to be contacted and agree. The portage around the dam in Ashuelot is also mentioned.

Open space/conservation City fair: Barbara asks for input about the current display. Does anyone have any pictures of interest? The current map is very good, however, it needs to be updated as two dams have been removed. It may be a larger project than it seems to amend the map and may require outside funding.

West St. dam/hydrologic study: The West St. dam people have asked for an extension through April, 2018. More studies would be done in 2017. The group wonders how the dam bureau will respond to this request, as the dam needs work. There is some discussion of the VHS report regarding the ecological impact of dam removal.

ARM funds: \$319,500 is available to the lower Connecticut valley through DES. The due date is April 29th, so ideas must be generated quickly. Are there any culverts that impede fish progress?

HB 1595: This law would require each riparian owner must be notified if another LAC is established. It has not yet passed. The in-stream flow bill ought to pass.

River training is May 10th: What should we ask from the towns? The treasury currently has \$1154. The equipment has gotten expensive. An idea is to upgrade slowly, a parameter at a time, for example, all the pH meters. The chemical reagents come from DES. Not all towns give, just those with active conservation commissions do. John moves we ask each town for \$125, Gus seconds. The motion passes.

Meetings:

NRAC/SWRPC ; Barbara attended the Feb. 24 meeting but few other LACs did. They are willing to place ARLAC events on their existing e-newsletter.

Dillant Hopkins airport planning meeting: March 16th. The airport property borders the river. If they change the runway, this could impact wetlands adjacent to the river.

Other meetings: Although all look interesting, the committee opts not to attend because of distance, time or not the desired target group for volunteers.

Submitted by,

Eloise Clark,
Secretary protem